

ANACOSTIA RIVER – Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD), in partnership with the Anacostia Watershed Restoration Partnership and the Anacostia Watershed Society, led a delegation of 40 federal, state and local leaders on a boat tour of the Anacostia River today. The purpose of the two-hour long tour was to bring together major stakeholders and decision-makers at various levels of government and agencies responsible for managing the Anacostia to facilitate discussions about how best to coordinate efforts and resources to restore the health of the river and the watershed.

“The Anacostia River is a one of our country’s most historic tributaries, beginning in Maryland, flowing past the shores of our Nation’s Capital and into the Potomac River and the majestic Chesapeake Bay,” said Congressman Steny H. Hoyer. “Restoring this once thriving river is a critical priority, and one that I believe can serve as a national symbol of environmental preservation. For the future of the Bay and for the residents of the National Capital Region, we must continue to work together to preserve and protect the health of the Anacostia, the Potomac and all our area waterways.”

The Anacostia Watershed encompasses 176 square miles throughout Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties in Maryland and in Washington, D.C. Once a historically and ecologically rich treasure nestled in our Nation’s Capital, the River’s current condition reflects decades of damage caused by urbanization and pollution. Dedicated partners at the federal, state, and local level in Maryland and the District of Columbia have worked together for over 15 years to bring about improvements in pollution control and watershed health.

“The Anacostia River is one of our greatest treasures,” said District of Columbia Mayor Adrian Fenty. “It’s an exceptional natural resource and an economic engine for the entire metropolitan area. I appreciate the work of our friends in Congress and the neighboring jurisdictions toward preserving and protecting the Anacostia.”

Efforts on the part of federal lawmakers have yielded an enhanced focus on restoring the Anacostia River and watershed. Earlier this year, the House passed the 2007 Water Resources Development Act reauthorizing the nation’s water resources projects. Members of the Maryland delegation along with Delegate Holmes Norton successfully included several provisions specific to the Anacostia restoration initiatives.

“It is vital that we work together to restore the Anacostia River to its original majestic state,” said Congressman Chris Van Hollen (D-MD). “My colleagues and I in Congress are working to fund projects that will help save the health of this once thriving waterway. The Anacostia is part of our identity as Marylanders, and it is important that we work to protect it.”

"I am pleased that the federal government and Congress are giving our forgotten river the attention it demands," stated Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC). "There is considerable federal economic activity on the Anacostia, including the Southeast Federal Center and Department of Transportation headquarters, as well as the new baseball stadium and other development."

Although restoration efforts have been ongoing for a number of years, formal cooperation between government agencies came with the 1987 signing of the Anacostia Watershed Agreement. In June 2006, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Board adopted a resolution that established a new Anacostia Watershed Restoration Partnership to better coordinate cleanup and restoration efforts.

Key governmental members of the partnership are the State of Maryland, the District of Columbia, Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Partnership is working to solve the watershed's key pollution problems and working to preserve the great beauty and economic and recreational values that exist in what could be the National Capital area's other "back yard."

Dana Minerva, Executive Director, Anacostia Watershed Restoration Partnership: "We want to make and keep the Anacostia watershed safe and clean for children and others in the National Capital Region who enjoy the outdoors. There will be a number of key opportunities over the next two years to make dramatic progress. But we won't make progress without the support of our political leaders, environmental advocates, business community, and citizens. That is why I am very appreciative that we had this opportunity to gather together to work on common sense solutions, and am optimistic about the future of the watershed."

Citizens have also taken greater ownership of their role in helping to protect and restore the Anacostia River and its watershed. Organizations such as the Anacostia Watershed Society and the Alice Ferguson Foundation have made incredible efforts to raise public awareness, advocate on behalf of the local environment, and organize major grassroots efforts to restore and preserve the health of the watershed.

Also in attendance were: Chairman of the U.S. House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee, Pete Visclosky; Secretary of the Maryland Department of the Environment Shari

Wilson; CAO of the U.S. House of Representatives, Daniel P. Beard; Col. Peter W. Mueller, Commander, Baltimore District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; Ben Grumbles, Assistant Administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; Dana Minerva, Executive Director of the Anacostia Watershed Restoration Partnership; David J. Robertson, Executive Director, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments; James Connolly, Executive Director, Anacostia Watershed Society; Executive Director of the Alice Ferguson Foundation Tracy Bowen; Robert Boone, President of the Anacostia Watershed Society; and representatives of the District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority and the Departments of the Environment for the District of Columbia, Prince George's County and Montgomery County.

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